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ABSTRACT

Jones and Hartmann (1988) investigated the relation between identity status and experimental substance use among adolescents in junior and senior high schools, identifying differences in substance use across four identity statuses for adolescents in general. This study was conducted to examine the generalizability of these differences across ethnic categories. The sample consisted of 14,173 7th through 12th graders, including 8,119 Anglos, 4,492 Hispanics, and 1,562 American Indians. For purposes of data analysis, a subsample was selected in which equal numbers of subjects of each ethnic group were represented in the four identity statuses (diffused, moratorium, achieved, foreclosed) and an unclassified status. The subsample included 512 Anglos, 478 Hispanics, and 495 American Indians. Subjects completed the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status and a questionnaire related to subjects' involvement with alcohol and various other kinds of drugs. The results revealed apparent ego-identity differences among the three ethnic groups in the larger sample which suggests that Hispanics and American Indians engage in less identity exploration than do Anglos. Ethnic differences continued to exist when identity statuses were viewed in relation to substance use patterns. American Indians had a higher percentage of having tried alcohol and drugs, while Hispanics and Anglos were similar in their lower substance use patterns. Future research might focus on the identity-substance abuse relation in addition to the identity-substance use relation examined here. (NB)

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# Ego-Identity and Substance Use Patterns Among Anglo, Hispanic, and American Indian Adolescents

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## Introduction

Erikson's (1963; 1968) sequential stages of psychosocial development provide a blueprint of developmental tasks that span the life cycle. In particular, the fifth stage (namely, identity achievement vs. role confusion) seems appropriate for describing adolescent behavior. Ironically, few investigations of substance use have recognized identity development as a potential mediator of initial and continued use. This exclusion is unfortunate given that both (identity development and initiation into substance use) typically emerge early in the second decade of life, and lifelong patterns for each begin to gel near the end of this period.

Jones and Hartmann (1988) have made an investigation into the relation between identity status, as delineated by James Marcia (1966), and experimental subtance use among 13,148 Arizona adolescents in grades 7 through 12. In contrast to foreclosed adolescents, they reported that diffused adolescents were about twice as likely to have tried cigarettes and alcohol, three times as likely to have tried marijuana, four times as likely to have tried inhalants, and five times as likely to have tried cocaine. Frequency of use of the moratorium and achieved adolescents fell somewhere between the two extremes demonstrated by the foreclosed and diffused adolescents.

The intent of the present investigation involved a delineation of the identity-substance use relation by Anglo, Hispanic, and American Indian ethnicities. Given that Jones and Hartmann (1988) have already identified differences in substance use across the four identity statuses for adolescents in general, questions concerning the generalizability of these differences across ethnic categories seem logical.

This seems to be a particularly important area of investigation in light of the fact that ethnic minorities must contend with many barriers and difficulties in identity formation, partially due to the effects of discrimination, which may, in turn, place them at greater risk for substance abuse. Indeed, in relation to Hispanics, Ruiz and Padilla (1983) note the many sources of extrapsychic stress related to ethnic minority membership (e.g., poverty and lower education levels). This is probably the case for other minority groups as well, including American Indians, who have been subject to discriminatory practices for centuries. Beauvais and LaBoueff (1985) have highlighted this point stating that the "Failure to understand the social, cultural, and geopolitical realities of American Indian life leads to inappropriate, and thus ineffective, solutions to social problems including alcohol and drug abuse" (p. 139).

Indeed, high incidences of substance use and abuse among minorities has been a focus of concern for several years. It has been reported in several studies that American Indian adolescents have higher rates of alcohol and drug use than their non-Indian counterparts (Beauvais & LaBoueff, 1985; Cockerham, Forslund & Raboin, 1976; Oetting & Beauvais, 1982; Porter, Vieira, Kaplan,

Heesch & Colyar, 1973).

There is less information available on substance use of Hispanics than many other minorities (Royce, 1981). Consistent with that statement, Humm-Delgado and Delgado (1983) reported that not enough evidence exists at this time to make a conclusive statement about Hispanic drug use, however, there is some evidence that Hispanics have a higher use of inhalants than other groups. Further, it is thought that the effects of poverty and racism probably compound drugs problems for Hispanics.

Given the fact that there are cultural differences and unique socialization experiences for each of the three groups under investigation in this study, it was anticipated that ego-identity status and drug use patterns would vary between Anglos, Hispanics, and American Indians.

## Methods

The sample consisted of 14,173, 7th through 12th grade, adolescents in 25 schools located in 16 towns and cities in Arizona. There were 8,119 Anglos, 4,492 Hispanics, and 1,562 American Indian adolescents. A sub-sample of this group was randomly selected for the purpose of data analysis in which equal numbers of subjects of each ethnic group were represented in the four identity statuses and an unclassified status. The sub-sample consisted of approximately equal numbers of Anglos (512), Hispanics (478), and American Indians (495).

During the 1987-88 school year respondents completed, in their classrooms, the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (OM-EIS) (Grotevant & Adams, 1984). The OM-EIS allows an examination of both interpersonal and ideological identities, as well as a combined scale identity score. Respondents may be classified in identity as achieved (high exploration with commitment), moratorium (high exploration without commitment), foreclosed (low exploration with commitment), or diffused (low exploration without commitment). An unclassified or second moratorium status is also identifiable in the OM-EIS, but much less is known about the nature of this status. For the purposes of this study, numerical cutoffs for determining the identity statuses of respondents were generated separately for each ethnic group.

A questionnaire related to their involvement with alcohol and various other kinds of drugs (cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, inhalants, marijuana, and cocaine) also was completed by respondents. The questionnaire was completed as part of a drug awareness program sponsored by State and Local agencies and the University of Arizona.

## Results and Discussion

There are several significant findings of this study which warrant discussion. First of all, in the larger sample there were apparent ego-identity differences between the three ethnic groups which may be viewed in Table 1. There was a larger percentage of achieved Anglos in comparison to Hispanic and

American Indian adolescents. In the foreclosure status, there were more Hispanic and American Indians than Anglos. There were a greater number of diffused American Indians than Hispanics and Anglos, and fewer Hispanics in moratorium than Anglos and American Indians. These findings are quite similar to Markstrom (1987) who found Mexican Americans and American Indians more foreclosed in ideological identity than both Anglos and Blacks. Further, in that study Anglos and Blacks demonstrated greater interpersonal achievement than Mexican Americans and American Indians. Likewise, Abraham (1986) found Mexican Americans more foreclosed in ideological identity than Anglos. Thus, taken together, these studies suggest that Hispanics and American Indians engage in less identity exploration than Anglos.

There are several plausible explanations for these findings. Hispanics and American Indians, both minority groups in American society, may take an inward focus toward their own groups due to the effects of prejudice and discrimination in society. Foreclosure may then be an adaptive gesture in the face of such treatment. Further, in both American Indian and Hispanic cultures, conformity to the group often is encouraged. Thus, the widely held beliefs of adolescence as a time of exploration and individuation may not be as salient in these cultures as they are in Anglo society. The expected behavior of American Indian and Hispanic adolescents may then be one of group conformity and commitment to culturally defined adult roles.

When the substance use patterns are taken into consideration along with ego-identity status, there are several additional findings to discuss which are quite compelling. The trends were quite similar for the larger sample and the sub-sample, which consisted of approximately equal number of subjects of each ethnic group in each identity status. However, in order to remain concise, the sub-sample findings will be discussed in greater detail. Table 2 presents a summary of the significant and nonsignificant main effects and interaction effects with identity status and ethnicity as variables.

In regards to the relation between identity status and those who reported ever having tried various drugs (see Table 3), foreclosed individuals had the overall lowest percentage of having ever tried drugs and diffused adolescents had the highest percentage of having tried drugs. These findings are quite similar to those reported by Jones and Hartman (1988) in their study on drug use patterns and ego-identity status.

An exception to these findings is that a high percentage of individuals in each of the identity statuses reported having used alcohol. In fact, diffused, achieved, and moratorium adolescents were quite similar in this regard. Even over half of the foreclosed adolescents reported having tried alcohol. These findings are suggestive of the fact that alcohol is a widely used drug in this society and is, in fact, the most widely used drug by adolescents (Johnston, Bachman & O'Malley, 1985). Further, Barnes (1977; 1984) has noted that adolescents are more likely to drink if their parents drink, and peers provide further

drink if their parents drink, and peers provide further reinforcement to engage in this behavior. The fact that drinking alcohol often is viewed as a rite of passage into adulthood also contributes to its widespread use (Barnes, 1981). Likewise, it is not surprising that a large percentage of achieved, moratorium, and diffused adolescents reported having tried cigarettes, which also may be viewed as a rite of passage.

There were significant differences between the three ethnic groups in terms of their use of cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants (see Table 4). It is interesting to note that a higher percentage of American Indians had reported trying these drugs than either the Anglos or the Hispanics. In all of the identity statuses for smokeless tobacco and marijuana, American Indians had higher percentage of having tried the drugs. Further, with the exception of the diffused status, American Indians had higher percentage of having used for all statuses in relation to cocaine and inhalants. Alcohol had been tried by a large percentage of the adolescents in each of the identity statuses, again suggesting the widespread use of this drug. Although nonsignificant, there also was a higher percentage of both Hispanics and American Indians who had tried cocaine in comparison to Anglos. However, cocaine use was the least tried drug by any of the three ethnic groups.

These findings are disturbing and suggest that American Indian adolescents are at greater risk for substance abuse problems. However, there are some reasonable explanations for some of these findings. Although American Indians show a higher percentage of having used cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, it is important to note the cultural significance of tobacco in Indian culture. Tobacco is an esteemed gift to give another and often is used for ceremonial purposes. Beauvais and LaBoueff (1985) have noted that a negative relation exists between the use of tobacco and peyote for sacred purposes and the use of drugs for illicit use. Thus, it might be expected that some American Indians would have higher involvement with these drugs due to cultural and religious influence.

Nonetheless, there is still a disturbingly large number of Indians who use and abuse drugs outside of the religious context (Beauvais & LaBoueff, 1985). What are the more disturbing findings of this study is the high use of marijuana, alcohol, and inhalants by American Indians adolescents. Even in the foreclosed status, where lower percentage of use would be expected, American Indians had fairly high use in contrast to the foreclosure statuses of other ethnic groups. It has been reported that younger Indian adolescents are quite active in their use of inhalants, and that alcohol replaces the use of inhalants by late adolescence for many Indians (Berlin, 1986). Thus, the relation between the use of these two drugs is of a sequential nature. Berlin (1986) also has noted the high use of marijuana by Indian youths and has observed that this drug, and others, are readily available on many reservations. Thus, accessibility may contribute to marijuana's high use by Indian

adolescents.

In terms of alcohol use, the high rate of alcoholism among adult American Indians has been noted in the literature (Beauvais & LaBoueff, 1985; Royce, 1981), and the high rate of use of alcohol among Indian adolescents has been shown in several studies. In terms of the present study, foreclosed Indian adolescents had a high percentage of having tried alcohol in contrast to the foreclosure status of the two other ethnic groups, however, this percentage was lowest in relation to Indians in other identity statuses.

Although Hispanics also are a minority and are subject to the effects of discrimination and prejudice like American Indians, they reported a lower use of smokeless tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana than both Anglos and American Indians. The fact that Hispanic families and communities are thought to be strengths for that minority (Melus, 1980; Padilla, Ruiz & Alvarez, 1983; Roybel, 1979) may be a factor in the decreased use of certain drugs by these adolescents. Drug using adolescents have been found to report little closeness between themselves and their parents (Jurich, Polson, Jurich & Bates, 1985). Thus, the fact that many Hispanic families are characteristically strong may have a diminishing effect on adolescent drug use.

There were two significant interactions between identity status and ethnicity for use of cigarettes and alcohol (see Figures 1 and 2). What seems to be a pattern with both of these drugs is that foreclosed Anglos show the lowest percentage of having ever tried these drugs. While diffused Anglos show the highest percentage, in contrast to diffusions in the two other ethnic groups. It appears that, for some reason, Anglos are strong contributors to the findings discussed earlier, that is, foreclosed individuals show the lowest percentage of use and diffused individuals show the greatest. Although nonsignificant, such a trend also is apparent for Anglos, in contrast to Hispanics and American Indians, for the use of marijuana, cocaine, and inhalants. Another prominent aspect of these interactions is that moratorium Hispanics have a lower percentage of having tried cigarettes and alcohol than Anglos and American Indians.

In summary, in classification of respondents into identity statuses there are apparent differences between the three ethnic groups. Further, ethnic differences continue to exist when identity statuses are viewed in relation to substance use patterns. Although American Indians and Hispanics are similar in that both are minorities and both scored higher in less exploratory forms of identity, American Indians have a disturbingly higher percentage of having tried alcohol and drugs. Hispanics seem more similar to Anglos in their substance use patterns. Although only substance use patterns were examined in this study, future investigations should include estimates of substance abuse. The identity-substance abuse relation is particularly important to investigate among those minority groups with higher than average rates of substance abuse.

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Table 1: Ego-Identity (classification results) distributed across Anglo, Hispanic, and American Indian adolescents (7th through 12th grade) from Arizona.

| | Respondent Ethnicity (N = 14,173) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Anglo (8,119) | Hispanic (4,492) | American Indian (1,562) |
| **Identity Status** | | | |
| Achievement | 10.3% (836) | 7.0% (315) | 6.3% ( 99) |
| Moratorium | 6.6% (533) | 4.8% (217) | 6.2% ( 97) |
| Foreclosure | 8.7% (706) | 13.0% (583) | 11.6% (181) |
| Diffusion | 8.7% (705) | 7.6% (340) | 10.2% (159) |
| Unclassified | 65.8% (5,339) | 67.6% (3,037) | 65.7% (1,026) |

Table 2: Summary of significant (++) and nonsignificant (--) effects on substance use associated with ego-identity status and respondent ethnicity.

| | Identity Status | Ethnicity | Ego X Ethnic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cigarettes | ++ | ++ | ++ |
| Smokeless Tpbacco | ++ | ++ | -- |
| Alcohol | ++ | -- | ++ |
| Marijuana | ++ | ++ | -- |
| Cocaine | ++ | -- | -- |
| Inhalants | ++ | ++ | -- |

Table 3: Percentages and analysis of variance results depicting the relationship between Substance Experience and Identity Status.

| | Identity Status classification | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ACH | MOR | FOR | DIF | UCL | F | p |
| Cigarettes | 74.2 | 76.9 | 47.5 | 80.7 | 62.6 | 27.09 | .001 |
| Smokeless Tobacco | 35.8 | 32.8 | 33.9 | 46.4 | 36.7 | 3.73 | .005 |
| Alcohol | 86.4 | 87.3 | 59.0 | 85.1 | 73.1 | 28.08 | .001 |
| Marijuana | 48.3 | 47.8 | 26.8 | 55.9 | 40.5 | 15.60 | .001 |
| Cocaine | 14.2 | 11.4 | 7.5 | 22.0 | 12.9 | 7.24 | .001 |
| Inhalants | 23.2 | 26.8 | 18.3 | 37.6 | 24.8 | 7.90 | .001 |

Table 4: Percentages and analysis of variance results depicting the relationship between Substance Experience and Respondent Ethnicity.

| | Respondent Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Anglo | Hispanic | Indian | F | p |
| Cigarettes | 64.7 | 64.6 | 76.0 | 10.54 | .001 |
| Smokeless Tobacco | 33.0 | 25.3 | 52.7 | 44.16 | .001 |
| Alcohol | 79.5 | 74.9 | 80.2 | 2.95 | .053 |
| Marijuana | 39.7 | 35.8 | 56.2 | 25.10 | .001 |
| Cocaine | 11.9 | 14.4 | 14.6 | .82 | .441 |
| Inhalants | 21.9 | 23.2 | 33.3 | 10.08 | .001 |

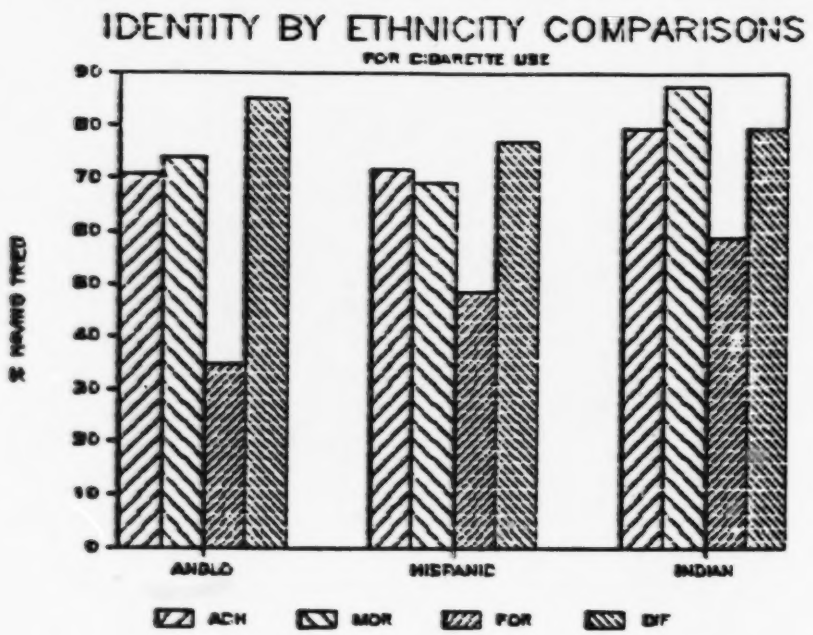


**Figure 1: Ego-Identity X Ethnicity and Cigarette use.**

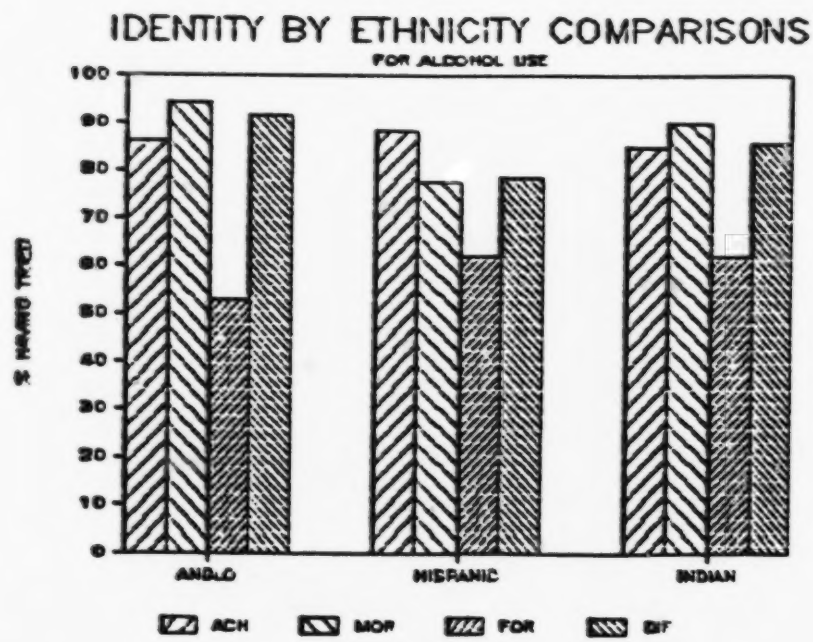


**Figure 2: Ego-Identity X Ethnicity and Alcohol use.**